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ABSTRACT

Students from the United States were compared with similar students from South Korea regarding their attitudes toward school, their perceived responsibility for learning, and their perceived relationships with teachers. Data were collected from 305 female and 301 male students in grades 7-12 in Korean middle schools and high schools through the use of Korean translations of instruments developed by R. E. Bills and others to assess affect. Findings were compared with those from the Bills 1978 data for the measures (Feelings about School, Locus of Responsibility, and Relationship Inventory) for more than 65,000 U.S. students. The data suggest that American students have a more positive attitude toward school, a more positively perceived responsibility for learning, and a more favorable relationship with their teachers than do Korean students. While American female students are more positive, male Korean students tend to have more positive attitudes. Four tables present study findings. (Contains 31 references.) (SLD)

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A Comparison of Korean and American Students' Attitudes About School

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A Comparison of Korean and American Students' Attitudes About School

Considerable research has centered on the comparisons of the achievement and ability levels of students from the United States of America (Americans) and those from foreign countries (e.g., Lynn, 1982, 1983; Lynn & Hampson, 1986; Moon, 1988; Stevenson & Azuma, 1983; Stevenson, Stigler, Lee, Lucker, Kitamura, & Hsu, 1985; Vining, 1983; Wang, 1992). Many such studies can be found comparing the achievement or abilities of American with Japanese students in general (Lynn, 1982, 1983; Lynn & Hampson, 1986; Stevenson & Azuma, 1983; Stevenson et al., 1985; Vining, 1983) and with Korean students in particular (Moon, 1988). However, both electronic and hand searches of the literature produced almost no citations comparing attitudinal variables such as students' attitudes toward school, responsibility for learning, and beliefs regarding relationships with teachers.

Since many of the studies previously cited suggest achievement differences in favor of foreign students, particularly oriental students (e.g., Stevenson & Azuma, 1983; Stevenson et al., 1985; Stigler, Lee, Lucker, & Stevenson, 1982), similar differences in attitudinal variables might suggest hypotheses to explain these differences. The purpose of this study was to compare students from the United States with similar students from Korea regarding their attitudes towards school, their perceived responsibility for learning, and their perceived relationships with their teachers.

Cross-cultural Study on Ability and Achievement

Cross-cultural differences in the achievement and ability levels of American and East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese) students have been actively investigated prompted by the Lynn (1982) conclusion of an 11-point WISC-R IQ superiority of Japanese over American children and adolescents. Many of those studies have compared Japanese and American students (Lynn, 1982; 1983; Lynn & Hampson, 1986; Stevenson & Azuma, 1983; Stevenson et al., 1985; Vining, 1983),

Chinese and American students (Stevenson et al., 1985; Wang, 1992), and Korean and American students (Moon, 1988).

Kaufman, McLean, Ishikuma, and Moon (1989) provided an integration of the literature on the intelligence of Japanese children and have analyzed the data from a sequential-simultaneous perspective. They also explored the hypothesis that Japanese children perform significantly better on simultaneous processing than on sequential processing. In their study, regression equations derived from a sample of American children who were tested on both the WISC-R and K-ABC were applied to Lynn's data on Japanese children. Results of these analyses supported the hypothesis of a discrepancy, with Japanese simultaneous processing being significantly greater than sequential processing, relative to American children, across virtually the entire 6- to 16-year age range. However, much of the discrepancy could be explained in terms of norms or testing procedures.

Moon (1988) investigated the factor structure of the Korean version of the K-ABC to evaluate construct validity evidence of the Korean K-ABC. In the factor analyses of all subtests of the Korean K-ABC, three factors (Sequential, Simultaneous, and Achievement) for school-age children and two factors (Sequential and Simultaneous/Achievement) for preschool children emerged as the most meaningful reduction of the data. These results showed that Korean children had a high sequential-low simultaneous profile on the Korean K-ABC mental processing subtests. He hypothesized that a high sequential-low simultaneous profile of Korean children might be applicable to preschool children only. The preschool children earned higher scores on all Sequential Processing subtests than on the Simultaneous Processing subtests, whereas the profile of school-age children tended to be heavily dependent upon the performance of the two subtests (high-Hand Movements and low-Gestalt Closure).

Wang (1992) presented results of a LISREL factor analysis on data from the WISC-R and the Chinese WISC-R for children ages 6.5 to 16.5 years. He found the same best fit common factor structure for both tests. He performed a multi-sample LISREL analysis to test the equality of the

factor pattern between age groups and between the two cultures. Results showed that both American and Chinese children in the oldest and youngest ranges of age groups fit the common factor structure better than did the other age groups. Those age groups that best fit the common factor structure also showed high factor pattern consistency between the cultures. It is argued that ability and model fit differences may be linked to differences in cultural and educational experiences.

On the other hand, Japanese students are consistently among the top performers in international studies of achievement in mathematics and science (Comber & Keeves, 1973; Husen, 1967). Korean students have also ranked as top performers in two international studies in mathematics and science (Lapointe, Mead, & Phillips, 1989; Lapointe, Mead, & Askew, 1992a; Lapointe, Mead, & Askew, 1992b). The high level of academic success of Asian-American children is a well-known feature of American society. Many hypotheses have been advanced to account for the high levels of achievement of children from families with Asian backgrounds, including the possibility that the cognitive abilities of these children exceed those of American children.

Cross-cultural Study on Attitude Assessment

There are far fewer cross-cultural studies on attitude, and none of these studies examined general attitudes about school or learning. For example, studies about attitudes toward the computer (Martin, Heller, & Mahmoud, 1992; Marcoulides & Wang), attitudes toward science (Haukoos & Chandayot, 1988), attitudes toward reading (Plake, Piersel, Harding, & Reynolds, 1982), international relationship and friendship (Cogan, Nakayama, Nakayama, & Camp, 1991; Engel, 1989), perceptions of speech rate (Lee & Boster), attitudes towards alcohol (Torabi & Seffrin, 1985), and nuclear war attitudes (Doctor, Goldenring, & Gross, 1986; Mayton & Sangster, 1992) can be found. Very few cross-cultural studies comparing American and East Asian student attitudes were found.

Engel (1989) compared Japanese and American ideals regarding material and extra-material friendship, intimacy, and employment related socialization. The results showed that Americans were found to place a higher value on material friendship, on emotional intimacy within and outside of marriage, on spousal involvement in work-related socialization, and on socialization as a couple rather than as individuals, whereas the Japanese subjects were found to believe more strongly that close friendships outside of marriage would have harmful effects on marriage. Nevertheless, the Japanese subjects tended to believe more strongly that husbands should socialize with co-workers after work rather than go home to be with the family, if such socialization would facilitate career advancement.

Cogan, Nakayama, Nakayama, and Camp (1991) presented survey results from American and Japanese high school and college students on the current state and future of the relationship between their two countries. On the major issues in the relationship between Japan and the United States, the Japanese responses tended to cluster around long-standing issues such as liberation of the rice market, trade friction, economic aid to the Middle East after the Gulf War, and the excess export of automobiles. The U.S. responses focused upon these and cross-cultural issues. In other words, the most pressing issue concerning the relationship between the two countries was the preconceived misperceptions about the other's culture and ways of thinking. They concluded that the students were most concerned with the development of understanding between the two cultures.

Marcoulides and Wang (1990) compared college students' attitudes toward computers, specially computer anxiety in the United States and in China. Results showed that both groups had a similar factor structure of computer anxiety.

Lee and Boster (1992) investigated the relative effects of speech rate in Korea and in the United States for perceptions of speakers' credibility. They found that rapid delivery can be used as an effective means of enhancing one's credibility in the United States and that this principle can be

generalized to Korean female speakers. On the other hand, slow delivery was more effective in increasing the credibility of Korean male speakers.

Bills' System for Assessing Affectivity

The Adult version of the Index of Adjustment and Values (IAV) was first published in 1951 (Bills, Vance, & McLean, 1951). The IAV is, essentially, a measure of self-concept or self-esteem. Three additional forms of the IAV were developed in 1959 for use with school-age children (Bills, 1975). The three levels were: The Elementary School IAV (ESIAV) which is used in grades 3 through 5; the Junior High School IAV (JHIAV) for grades 6 through 8 or 9; and the High School IAV for grades 9 through 12. Bills (1975) published the complete system for assessing affectivity, which described a variety of instruments for assessing the affective climates for learning in schools and the affective learning of students. Instruments included in his system for assessing affectivity were Feelings About School, the Locus of Responsibility Scale, the Relationship Inventory, four levels of the Index of Adjustment and Values, and a Parent Inventory. He reported measures of reliability and validity and summarized all data collected with the instruments from 1969 through 1974 (Bills, 1975).

Data collected between 1975 and 1978 using the instruments as part of needs assessment studies for the General Assistance Center of The University of Alabama were published in 1978 (Bills, 1978). About 120,000 elementary and secondary students and/or their parents participated; the majority of the sample is from the Southeast, and of these states, the largest number is from Alabama. The data were summarized to provide descriptive and normative statistics and then examined for trends by grade, sex, and race. White females had the most positive school attitudes and enjoyed the best relationships with their teachers, although for all groups both attributes decline with increasing age. Parents' attitudes likewise became more negative.

Although Bills' instruments are psychometrically sound measures, researchers and practitioners seldom include measurement of students' affectivity in studies. His system for assessing affectivity could be a valuable assessment tool for comparing some cultural differences on students' affects.

Method

Sample

Data were collected from seventh through twelfth grade students in Korea and in the United States. The Korean subjects were 305 girls and 301 boys from 12 classrooms in 6 middle schools and 6 high schools selected as a representative sample of middle and high schools in Taegu, Korea. The subjects by grade were 104 students (52 girls and 52 boys) for grade 7, 104 students (54 girls and 50 boys) for grade 8, 95 students (48 girls and 47 boys) for grade 9, 106 students (56 girls and 50 boys) for grade 10, 98 students (50 girls and 48 boys) for grade 11, and 99 students (45 girls and 54 boys) for grade 12. All data were collected in 1993.

The American subjects were seventh through twelfth grade students selected from Bills' (1978) data. The size of the sample varied with each of the instruments, partially because of the grade configurations of the schools studied and partially because of the applicability of the instruments to different grade ranges. Among 120,000 elementary and secondary students in the Bills (1978) study, 20,118 students (8,861 girls and 8,242 boys) completed Feelings About School, 20,762 students (10,028 girls and 9,311 boys) completed the Locus of Responsibility Scale, and 24,174 students (11,302 girls and 10,399 boys) completed the Relationship Inventory. They were compared with their Korean counterparts. It should be noted that the data were collected between 1975 and 1978.

Instrumentation

The Bills instruments used in the study were the Feelings About School (FAS), the Locus of Responsibility Scale (LORS), and the Relationship Inventory (RI). The Feelings About School (FAS) is an attitude instrument consisting of 50 true-false statements and is used in grades 4-12. The FAS has three forms: FAS, FAS1, and FAS2. The 110 items of the FAS include the items for both the 50-item FAS1 and the 50-item FAS2. On the basis of 2,891 cases, the corrected coefficient of internal consistency for FAS was determined to be .92. For FAS1 and FAS2 and based on a sample of 2,691 returns, the corresponding consistency coefficients were .89 and .91 respectively (Bills, 1975). The FAS1 was used in the present study.

The Locus of Responsibility Scale (LORS) consists of a 27- item multiple choice instrument designed to yield a description of the nature of the classroom interaction between teachers and students as perceived by students. The LORS has three categories: teacher-centeredness, interaction, and student-centeredness. Teacher-centeredness is a measure of the degree to which teachers make decisions for their students. Interaction is the degree to which students and teachers interact while making decisions. And student-centeredness is a measure of the degree to which teachers permit students to make decisions for themselves. The corrected coefficient of internal consistency was .69, based on 2,769 students (Bills, 1975).

The Relationship Inventory (RI) includes 72 items that are answered on a six-point Likert-type scale to describe the quality of the relationship a student perceives to exist between him or her and the teacher. The RI yields scores on four interpersonal relationship qualities which are believed to be both necessary and sufficient for helping to promote the personal growth of people. The four characteristics are Level of Regard (how the teacher regards the worth of the child as an individual), Empathic Understanding (the ability of a teacher to understand a child as the child understands him- or her-self), Unconditionality of Regard (to what degree does a teacher place a "price" on his or her

regard for the student--does the teacher regard the student as important regardless of how he or she behaves, dresses, lives, etc.?), and Congruence (is the teacher behaving in a manner consistent with what he or she is thinking or feeling?). The corrected split-half correlations for the scales are: Level of Regard, .79, Empathic Understanding, .73, Unconditionality of Regard, .58, Congruence, .58, and total scale of all items, .89) (Bills, 1975).

The three instruments were translated into Korean by the second author. Every attempt was made to provide a Korean version that was as faithful a representation of the English version as possible. Once the Korean version was prepared, two Korean colleagues, one the first author and one a linguist, were asked to check the instrument and compare it to the English version. A few minor changes in the Korean wording resulted in the final Korean version of the instruments. Efforts were made to maintain the measuring of the items over syntactic structure.

Procedures

The Bills (1978) subjects were fourth through twelfth grade students for FAS and LORS and sixth through twelfth grade students for RI. In this study, the results of the seventh through twelfth grade students were extracted from his data.

Data collection for the Korean sample was conducted between April and May, 1993. Six middle schools and six high schools located in Taegu city, Korea were involved in this study. The Korean versions of FAS, LORS, and RI were administrated by classroom teachers with the first author and their principals' cooperation. All subjects were asked to respond to all the items in the booklet which was composed of FAS, LORS, and RI in order without using answer sheets. The first author supervised the transfer of the data to a computer file that was then uploaded to The University of Alabama's mainframe computer for analysis.

Analyses

The collected Korean data was scored using methods suggested by Bills (1975). The negative items were reversed before the total score of the instruments was computed. Descriptive statistics of each instrument and t-tests for comparing group means' differences were analyzed using SAS procedures. Reliability of the instruments was assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha for Korean data. The values were .34 for the FAS, .64 for LORS, and .86 for RI. A series of t-tests was used to compare the differences between American and Korean students' attitudes about school.

Results

The means and standard deviations obtained by two samples are presented in Table 1. To test the overall cultural differences between two countries, a series of t-tests were used for each instrument and sub-categories of the instruments.

Table 1

Overall Mean and Standard Deviation in FAS, LORS, and RI

Test	United States (US)			Korea (KOR)			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
FAS	20,117	3.66	19.03	606	-5.82	16.66	12.15***
LORS -TC	20,761	19.80	8.52	606	8.11	3.04	33.70***
LORS -IN	20,761	16.42	8.68	606	15.25	8.13	3.28**
LORS -SC	20,761	7.89	4.71	606	3.24	3.27	24.16***
RI- REG	24,173	9.65	20.93	606	0.22	14.46	11.03***
RI- EMP	24,173	2.87	15.02	606	-8.72	13.93	18.80***
RI- UNC	24,173	0.76	12.67	606	-2.85	10.49	6.96***
RI- CON	24,173	8.53	15.26	606	2.78	12.12	9.20***

**p < .01 ***p < .001

For the FAS, the total scores of the American students exceeded those of Korean students. It should be noted that Korean students had more negative scores than their American counterparts on the instrument.

For the LORS, teacher-centered, interaction, and student-centered variables showed significant differences between students in the two cultures. The total scores of the American students were higher than those of the Korean students in all three sub-categories.

For the RI, Level of Regard, Empathic Understanding, Unconditionality of Regard, and Congruence variables showed significant differences between students from the two countries. The total scores of the American students were higher than those of their Korean counterparts in all four categories.

Responses to the FAS were then broken down by gender and culture. Means and standard deviations for the FAS are displayed in Table 2. Two t-tests were performed to compare the gender differences of the FAS in Korea and in the United States.

Table 2

Gender Differences in FAS

FAS	Girls			Boys			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
U.S.	8,861	4.07	19.08	8,242	2.46	18.81	5.55***
Korea	305	-9.13	17.36	301	-2.47	15.24	5.02***

*** $p < .001$

There were significant differences in Feelings About School both in the Korean sample and in the U.S. sample. American girls have more positive attitudes toward school than do boys, while Korean boys have more positive attitudes toward school than do girls.

The means and standard deviations obtained by gender in the two cultures on each category of the LORS are presented in Table 3. Scores on the scales were subjected to a series of t-tests to compare the gender differences of the LORS in the two countries.

Table 3

Gender Differences in LORS

LORS	Girls			Boys			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
TC-US	10,028	19.76	8.61	9,311	20.00	8.52	1.95
-KOR	305	8.48	3.07	301	7.73	2.96	3.03**
IN-US	10,028	17.13	8.87	9,311	15.52	8.40	12.94***
-KOR	305	15.38	8.27	301	15.12	8.00	0.38
SC-US	10,028	7.41	4.57	9,311	8.39	4.88	14.43***
-KOR	305	2.85	2.94	301	3.64	3.53	3.01**

** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

There were significant differences in students' perceived responsibility for learning between the two cultures, except in the American teacher-centered scale and the Korean interaction scale. The scores show that Korean female students are more teacher dominated than are Korean male students, that American female students enjoy more interaction with their teachers than do American male students, and that both American and Korean male students are given more freedom to make decisions for themselves.

Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations of the four scales in RI for American and Korean students. A series of t-tests was performed to compare the gender differences in the two cultures.

Table 4

Gender Differences in RI

RI	Girls			Boys			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
REG-US	11,302	11.21	21.68	10,399	7.90	20.31	11.58***
- KOR	305	-0.10	16.95	301	0.53	11.41	0.53
EMP-US	11,302	3.63	15.97	10,399	1.70	14.10	9.41***
-KOR	305	-10.39	15.30	301	-7.03	12.19	2.99**
UNC-US	11,302	1.43	13.17	10,399	-0.23	12.09	9.65***
-KOR	305	-2.87	11.28	301	-2.83	9.64	0.04
CON-US	11,302	10.04	15.78	10,399	6.37	14.47	17.82***
-KOR	305	3.56	13.84	301	1.99	10.05	1.60

** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 4 shows that the gender differences for the American sample are statistically significant in four scales, while those for the Korean sample are significant only in the Empathic Understanding scale. The American female students enjoy a better quality relationship with their teachers than do the American male students in the four subscales measuring the relationships between students and teachers. The Korean female students have poorer relationships with their teachers than the Korean males in the Empathic Understanding scores.

Summary and Conclusions

Taken at face value, the data suggest that the American students have more positive attitudes toward school, a more positively perceived responsibility for learning, and more favorable relationships with their teachers than do the Korean students. We found some gender differences between the American and Korean students. The American female students are more positive than the American males in their attitudes toward school, while the Korean male students are more positive

than the Korean female students. The Korean female students are more teacher dominated than are the Korean males, while the American female students enjoy considerably more interaction with their teachers than do the American males. Both American and Korean male students are given more freedom to make decisions for themselves than are American and Korean females, respectively. The American female students have more favorable relationships with their teachers than American males, while the Korean male students have more favorable relationships with their teachers than Korean females as shown only in the Empathic Understanding subscale.

For Korean participants the data suggest that they have negative attitudes toward school, a lower perceived responsibility for learning, and unfavorable relationships with their teachers. One possible explanation for these results is a weak and insufficient educational environment. First, the classes are large throughout Korea. The median size of classes participating in this study was 50 students. Most teachers could not use individualized instruction, and their teaching load was too heavy. Teachers can give attention to only a few students, and most students do not have an opportunity to talk with their teachers personally. Second, the public school is furnished very sparingly, compared with American schools. For example, there is no carpet, no air conditioning, and wood or coal stoves provide minimal heat in the public schools. Third, the college entrance examination governs the curriculum in lower level education. Although the educational system in Korea has a national curriculum, the teachers emphasize only a few academic subjects which play an important part in the college entrance examination.

Unlike the American females (Bills, 1978), the Korean female students have negative attitudes toward school and are teacher dominated because of the strong male-dominance characteristic of Korean society (Lee & Boster, 1992; Yum, 1987). Another possible explanation of this result is that the academically oriented subjects offered in the high school are not desired by female students who often cannot go to college.

For U.S. participants there were two interesting findings. First, although their achievement tends to be lower than Korean students (Lapointe, Mead, & Phillips, 1989), U.S. students' attitudes toward school tended to be higher than that of their Korean counterparts in this study. There are some possible explanations for the results. The differences in the two cultures are related to the organization and conduct of the classrooms (Stevenson et al., 1987). Like Chinese and Japanese students, Korean students spend much more time in academic activities than in extra-curricular activities. They stay in one classroom and save time spent in class transition because the teachers change class, not the students. They spend much time taking multiple choice paper-and-pencil tests in the classroom. Parents and teachers push their students' achievement in the Korean language, mathematics, and English. Korean students have high motivation to get good scores in international competition (Wainer, 1993). These characteristics of the Korean sample can be contributors to increase their achievement, but at the same time factors to make their negative attitudes toward school.

Second, unlike the Korean females, the American female students have more positive attitudes toward school and more favorable relationships with their teachers than do the American males. One possible explanation is the difference in the structure and tradition of society. American society has a tradition of lady-first, but the Korean society has strong male-dominance characteristics. The American females have more equal opportunity as compared to the males than do their Korean counterparts at home, school, and in society.

There were some limitations in this study. The Korean sample was selected from 12 schools located in Taegu, Korea, which may not be representative of the general population. The reliability for the Korean version of Bills' instruments, particularly the FAS, was low. This may be due to the items being interpreted differently in the two cultures. The time gap between the Korean and the American sample was 15 years because the American sample was extracted from the Bills (1978)

study. It should also be noted that the instruments were written and validated from an American perspective. What is indicative of a positive attitude about schools in the U.S. may be different in Korea. Considering these limitations, the main conclusion to be drawn from this study is that American students like school better than do their Korean counterparts. The gender differences between the two countries are interesting. American female students like school better than do American males, but Korean male students like school better than do Korean females.

There is an implication for the American schools. Without considering the abilities, needs, and capabilities of individual students, the academic emphasis in the schools may result in making their negative attitudes toward school. It is important to continue cross-cultural research of students' attitudes toward school to encourage a global communication between countries. Further research needs to be repeated on a regular basis to assess whether these attitudes change over time and, if so, how.

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